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A VERSIFICATION OF THE LETTER OF THE
COMMITTEE OF ACCOUNTS, TO THE PRESI-
DENT OF CONGRESS, 1779.

[In the session of July 31, 1779, Congress agreed to an "Ordinance for establishing a Board of Treasury and the proper officers for managing the finances of these United States." There were certain provisions in it which called forth a memorial from a number of officers in the Department, who expressed their views concerning that part which subjects the officers of the Treasury to an annual election,—that in all other countries they are appointed during good behavior and should be here. Long practice is essential in accounts,—inexperienced people cannot conduct the business,—confusion and disarrangement will take place in our finances. This Congress cannot depend upon the wisdom of succeeding Congresses,—new members, unacquainted with the merits of those in office and desirous of providing for their friends, may make changes; the precarious tenure contemplated will dampen zeal and industry of Treasury officers; they will regard their offices as places of convenience, and will take the first opportunity to leave them; it would be wholly different if they held them during good behavior. Frequent elections have arguments to support them in other offices, not in the Treasury however. Silence on their part would have been criminal and they are confident Congress will receive their memorial with candor and liberality. This memorial was signed by William Govett, R. Smith and William Geddes, commissioners; Robert Troup, secretary, and Joseph Nourse, assistant auditor general, and presented to Congress August 6th.

The letter of the "Committee of Accounts," is not to be found in the Manuscript Division of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, but the versification of it has been preserved. The handwriting has not been identified.—ED. PENNA. MAG.]

We beg your Excellency's kindest care,
To have the orders that enclosed are,
(All rang'd and numbered, one, two & three
That with the dates exactly they agree),
Made known unto your Honorable House,
That they may injur'd innocence espouse.
The terms they're couch'd in you may plainly see,
Is an Affront cast on our dignity.
Waving all ceremony in the words beside
In substance there's an Oblique charge imply'd

For it supposes we our time Mispent
Which is unmerited and false, we Apprehend.

The Ordinance, Sir, perhaps you may remind
Was dated July thirtieth, seventy-nine,
In which it may not be amiss to note
There is contained the paragraph we quote,
To wit, "That the Commissioners above direct,
"And if need be, suspend for gross neglect,
"All Officers concern'd in the finance,
"Till Congress judge the charges they advance."
Of Congress, therefore, humbly we intreat,
If in their wisdom they shall think it meet
To call on these same men to lay their charge
(Either on one or all of them at large),
And prove it too, which till they do, we think
We may with safety at their Bustle wink
Their orders, queries, and enquiries sure
Are ex-official, unsupported, premature,
For in our humble notion of the clause,
Which we have quoted just before the pause,
No other meaning it can comprehend,
Than what to matters of Accounts extend.
Nor farther *there* than barely to direct
What parts the duties of our Office may respect.
Conscious, of faithfulness and diligence
Had we not testimonies clear in our defence
Applause of men who at that Board have sat
Alternately, will justify asserting that
Members of Congress and to business train'd,
Committees too, our cause have oft maintain'd,
That we according as our Oaths direct,
Attend our duty and no point neglect—
It wounds our feelings after all to find
Our conduct censur'd by those men unkind.
Sir, *Be it known*, that we from conscience act,
And not one penny for our pains exact
The dictates of our free born mind inspires
Our breasts with patriot love and zealous fire,
And when to this enthusiasm we add
The importance of the Offices we've had
On which the welfare of our Country All depends,
As on a scale whose Beam one arm suspends,

We think on us thus circumstanced to lay
 Restrictions or point out what time of day
 We shall employ in Arduous drudgery,
 Is mean and servile to the last degree.
 Moreover, plainly it to us appears,
 (For, Sir, we are not without cares and fears),
 An arbitr'y attempt for to deprive
 Us of the privileged we now derive,
 From the indulgence Congress have been pleas'd
 To grant us, e'er we thus were plagued and teaz'd.
 But, Sir, as 'tis a frailty of the human mind,
 Often to wander and leave truth behind,
 Misapprehensions and mistakes we know
 No mortals' free from in this state below—
 That indiscriminately all do err
 (Ev'n you yourself) we safely may aver,
 Yet there are none so reprehensible
 As those who Obstinate persist in't still
 We'll think ourselves in future freed from doubt
 Or misconstruing what we are about.
 If Congress tell us what they really mean
 By this same Clause which causes so much spleen,
 That for ourselves in future we may judge
 Whether as Clerks of Office we will drudge,
 Or if we don't our pristine rights regain
 Resign our seats tho' it must give you pain.
 Our feelings, Sir, as Gentlemen are hurt
 No less, to see our honour trampled in the dirt,
 And we commanded up two pair of stairs
 There with diligence to dispatch affairs
 That *they* may think our first attention call,
 And we're to be no judges of that at all.
 But bad as this may seem 'tis not the worst,
 'Tis our misfortune to be doubly curst
 For lo! the very best room's occupy'd
 (And we are sure a public charge beside),
 By one we can't tell why, but so it is
 His very looks chagrin and change our Phiz.
 And, tho' with sorrow, we must further add,
 That we suspect his order to have had
 Its origin from him because that he
 Of late against us has conceiv'd an enmity,

For a Report we made upon his charge
For office rent, wherein we state at large
The strongest reasons mortal man can give—
For which we merit honour while we live.
We wish your honor's would be pleased to call
For this Report and his Appeal, and all—
(And that your time cannot be better spent
Than in this business, sure you'll all consent)
Why, with impunity should he despise
And make his fun of us before our eyes?
Nay more, endeavour us to overawe
And make us swerve from our official law.
Now, Sir, if further proof is wanted still
(For every thing they've done, deny they will),
To show that they have harboured such a thought,
That we've not done our business as we ought,
To which we're bound by all the solemn ties,
That nature of our sacred oath implies,
We beg to mention that it once was mov'd
By a Commissioner, but not approv'd,
That one of them with us should always sit
And make us work whenever they thought fit.
From Circumstances we are prone to think
(Now can you longer at such conduct Wink!)
It also was propos'd by one, and he
None of the last in point of primacy
To task us by the week, without regard
Whether Accounts were in their nature hard
With such a certain sett which must be done
At all events befor the setting Sun }
Of Saturday his daily round had run. }
Besides the Order which is herewith sent
Does most effectually us prevent
From settling finally as heretofore
Any accounts that may have come before.
Our Board, for they in words expressly say,
We must report on all without delay,
And yet it may not be unworthy, Sir,
To this same Order once more to recur
Where inconsistently you see they bid
We still observe the mode we always did!
Upon the whole, we beg leave to submit
Whether or no Congress shall think it fit

To suffer orders that directly tend
To raise disturbances, and in the end
Subvert all order, peace and harmony
Which we enjoy'd 'till now most happily.
And now, I believe we've said all we can say,—
Three days we've been composing this essay—
The style is pompous, elegant and high,
Such as might grace the pen of Majesty.
And to conclude—Oh no! there's one thing more,
And some may think it should be said before
That is, we wish that Congress would elect
A Committee of three who might inspect
Into our Conduct and report thereon,
Which will stand fair, we'll lay you ten to one.